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NEWS AND NOTES

PROGRESS OF THE NATIONAL SYLLABUS

The publication of the first preliminary report of the Joint Committee on the Reorganization of High-School English by the Bureau of Education at Washington has aroused widespread interest. Numerous inquiries are being received as to the completion of the work. It may be stated with confidence that the final report will appear before the close of the present school year. The committee now numbers thirty and is divided into eight subcommittees, some of which have already completed their work.

The complete report will include a historical account, a statement of the modern point of view, the definite aims of English teaching, a description of the activities which are profitable, a series of projects in composition, a list of literary selections with values and appropriate methods, a discussion of home reading, a discussion of the place of spelling, grammar, and literary history and their relation to composition and literary study, a few typical high-school courses in English adapted to given communities, a number of sections devoted to equipment, economy of time, proper organization of classes, preparation of teachers, etc., and finally a classified and annotated bibliography. All these topics relate to the work of six years, beginning with the seventh grade of the elementary school. In the second preliminary report of the committee, which was presented at St. Paul, Minnesota, in July last, appeared a trial statement of attainment in English at the end of the sixth school year. This is reproduced below. Criticism of it will be welcomed.

ATTAINMENT IN ENGLISH AT THE END OF THE SIXTH SCHOOL YEAR

The Joint Committee on High-School English has assumed from the beginning that, in the near future, secondary education in the United States will begin with the seventh school year. Hence, in seeking to provide for proper articulation between elementary and secondary work in English, the committee has found it desirable to inquire as to what sort of foundation in English can be laid in the first six grades. It cannot be too strongly emphasized, however, that the committee does

not assume the right or the wisdom to set up standards of admission to the high school. The painful history of the college-entrance requirements and the equally painful history of the overloading of the elementary course of study by the well-meaning college specialists on the Committee of Ten and its subsidiary committees provide a sufficient warning. Such statements of attainment as the present committee will venture to make will be drawn from the actual experience of elementary principals and teachers and will be found modest enough. Indeed, what is most needed is not a theoretical raising of standards but a sorting-out of essentials and more generally efficient methods of securing a mastery of them.

It is important to bear in mind that there are two distinct aspects of the process of education. The first is purposeful activity, resulting in habit, and the second is interpretation of experience, resulting in knowledge. Both should have a place in the elementary school, but unquestionably the first should receive chief emphasis there. Children learn by *doing* rather than by the more formal rationalizing processes. Indeed, the chief distinction between the education of children under twelve and those above that age is to be found in the fact that with the seventh grade may be said to begin the really systematic ordering of the facts of experience into scientific knowledge.

It follows that a statement of attainment for the elementary period should be mainly in terms of habits, of ability to do, rather than in terms of facts and principles which the children should be expected to state. Granting that the unity of consciousness prevents any actual separation of doing and knowing, one may nevertheless hold that there is great advantage in measuring achievement in terms of the former. After all the only sufficient test of ability is the meeting and mastering of real conditions, and teachers need constantly to be on their guard lest they mistake a certain facility in professing the forms of knowledge for actual initiative and control.

With these principles in mind we may now attempt to state in outline what normal children may be expected to do when they have reached the close of the sixth grade:

1. To express clearly and consecutively, either in speech or in writing, ideas which are entirely familiar to them.
2. To avoid, both in speech and in writing, gross incorrectness of grammar.
3. To write and mail a letter, using a form acceptable for general purposes.

4. To spell the vocabulary which they commonly write and to make sure of new or doubtful words.

5. To read silently and after one reading to reproduce the substance of a simple story, news item, or lesson.

6. To read aloud readily and intelligibly news items from the school paper, lessons from the textbooks being used, or literature of such difficulty as "The Ride of Paul Revere" or Dickens' *Christmas Carol*.

7. To quote accurately and understandingly several short poems such as Bennet's "The Flag Goes By" and Emerson's "The Mountain and the Squirrel."

Everyone will understand that such an outline is in no sense to be regarded as a course of study in English, nor as a complete summary of all that children should and do gain from the study of reading and composition. The more fundamental and far-reaching results, which can be expressed only in terms of character, are here only implied. They come, moreover, if they come at all, from the entire life of the school, not from a single study. Nevertheless, teachers of experience will see at a glance that it will require a well-organized and efficiently administered course to establish, not merely in the exceptional child, but in all normal children, the habits set forth in the seven items mentioned above. For the true test of such habits is that they assert themselves regularly, not merely under the special conditions of a school examination.

ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSOCIATIONS

NEW YORK CITY

The Association of High-School Teachers of English of New York City issued in September an eighteen-page leaflet containing abstracts of reports submitted by its committees during the school year of 1913-14. These abstracts are very interesting and suggestive.

The first shows that technical grammar receives the lion's share of the time for English in the seventh and eighth grades but that it is not as a rule closely related to training in expression. An immediate reform is urged.

The second embodies an investigation into the relations of grammar-school and high-school composition work. It is recommended that a minimum requirement in composition be made of grammar-school pupils on entering high schools. This should include sentence recognition, simple paragraph recognition, letter form, fundamental spelling rules, ability to choose and narrow a composition subject, ability to

apply a knowledge of grammar to composition, and mastery of the common English idiom. It is also urged that grammar schools place more stress upon applied grammar, spontaneous written expression, composition based upon experience, paragraphs and sentences as complete units of thought in both oral and written expression, spelling by means of word-study and the compilation of spelling-lists, and literature as literature rather than literature as a source of composition work.

The third is a study of program work. This includes assembly programs, public-speaking contests, presentation of plays, etc. The committee favors making an effort to secure recognition of such work as a part of the teacher's regular daily task but opposes using programs as a means of inciting pupils to good behavior and effective study. The committee thinks choice of material a very important problem and makes detailed suggestions as to the guidance of pupils in that particular. The report closes with several definite recommendations as to means of exchanging ideas among schools, controlling inter-school contests, and the like.

The fourth, based upon a series of investigations, deals also with the articulation of grammar school and high school. The grades in high-school composition show that the time consumed in the study of grammar in the seventh and eighth grades was probably in large part wasted. The committee believes standardization of essentials necessary and pleads for better co-operation of other departments with the English department. It believes there should be more freedom to adapt the course of study to local conditions.

The fifth is devoted to oral English, showing its importance and pleading for a large place for it in the schools. It should be required of all students, attention should be paid to speech defects, and actual study of the subject, with appropriate credits, should be provided for. The syllabus prepared by the elocution teachers of the city is recommended for use.

The sixth attempts to show how the preparatory work of the high school can be brought into effective relation with the professional work of the training school. This is to be accomplished by bringing the high-school pupil to a more vivid consciousness of the purpose and method of composition and grammar as organized forms of experience. Textbooks in both subjects should be used in the later high-school years. There should be more emphasis on the study of words and upon definition and classification. The greatest need, however, is for attention to the speech of the individual.

The seventh and last abstract sums up the report of the Committee on Ethics in Literature. Moral training through literature must come indirectly, not didactically. Hence the important thing is to choose the best books and to teach these for their human interest. The pupil should be encouraged to interpret what he reads in the light of his own experience. Outside reading should be directed to books and magazines likely to cultivate high ideals of patriotism and civic responsibility. A trial list of books for this and other similar purposes is appended.

The secretary-treasurer of the New York Association of Teachers of English is Harvey L. Bagenstose, 298 Parkside Ave., Brooklyn, to whom correspondence concerning these excellent reports may be directed.

INDIANA

Because the time of meeting of the State Teachers' Association coincided with that of the English Teachers' Association, the latter body held a joint session with the high-school section of the State Teachers' Association on October 29. There were morning and afternoon sessions, with a dinner at six o'clock. The speaker for the English teachers was Professor James F. Hosis, secretary of the National Council, and for the high-school section, Principal W. D. Lewis of the William Penn High School of Philadelphia. The audience numbered about twelve hundred.

Mr. Hosis's morning topic was "The Separation of the Teaching of Composition and the Teaching of Literature." He pointed out that there is considerable confusion as to what the real meaning of separation of composition and literature is. He said that it does not mean that composition should be separated from literature, but that a time should be set aside when reading, writing, and talking for everyday uses may be carried on, while at other times appreciation of literature should be the aim. In the country at large, the English courses in the high schools are on a preparatory-school basis, but the demand of today is that the student should be brought into situations that are real to him so that he may know how to speak and write for present-day uses. He needs present-day models of good writing rather than models taken from famous authors of the past who are acknowledged to have been born with genius. Another good point that Mr. Hosis made was that the high-school age is not the time for a minute study of literature, and that the purpose of the high-school course should not be to have the student letter-perfect in all the details of the piece of literature put before him.

In the afternoon Mr. Hosis discussed in a general way the minimum essentials in English in the high school and in the grades. In this

discussion he again brought out very clearly the modern point of view in regard to the teaching of English.

The first business of a teacher is to assign lessons and develop topics, and then use the textbook more as a laboratory manual and not as an encyclopedia. The community, he said, demands that the schools prepare young people for life. To be prepared for life, according to Mr. Holic, a student must have culture, efficiency, and the will to serve. By service is meant making a living and thus rendering a service not only to society but to one's self, supporting those who are immediately dependent on him, helping those about him to support others, and working to improve the industrial, political, and social conditions of the community and the nation.

At the close of this address, a number of questions were asked and answered.

In his address Mr. Lewis pointed out how the administration of a school should have a social aim and that in order to give such a trend to his school, the principal must have an opportunity to have a wide vision and to study the community and the relation of the school to it. In the afternoon, in answer to questions, Mr. Lewis explained some of the admirable features in the organization of his high school to give the pupils genuine education through activities in social situations that the school affords.

Eighty-one persons gathered at the banquet, where the speakers were Mr. Lewis, Dr. R. E. Kelly, president of Earlham College, who spoke on "Teaching the Bible in Public Schools," and Professor Frank Aydelotte, of Indiana University, who spoke on "Oxford and the Rhodes Scholars." Mr. Aydelotte made the interesting point that these scholarships, to the student worth \$1,500 a year for three years, are going begging in some states because boys in the high schools do not know of the particulars of this fine opportunity of securing a unique educational experience. The United States needs to send strong representatives to Oxford, and the high schools really have a duty to perform in giving proper publicity to these scholarships.

The officers elected for the year are: president, E. H. Kemper McComb, Manual Training High School, Indianapolis, Indiana; vice-president, Miss Elizabeth Williams, Richmond; secretary-treasurer, Miss Helen R. Lang, Manual Training High School, Indianapolis, Indiana.

E. H. K. McC.

MICHIGAN

The president of the Michigan State Teachers' Association this year was Mrs. Henry Hulst, of Grand Rapids. True to her chief interest, Mrs. Hulst revived the English section and appointed Professor John R. Brumm, of the State University, chairman. The speakers on October 30 were Miss Alma Blount, of the State Normal School at Ypsilanti, Professor Hosic, of the Chicago Normal College, and Professor Fred N. Scott, of the University of Michigan. Miss Blount criticized the Joint Report on Grammatical Nomenclature; Professor Hosic outlined the reorganization of the high-school course, and Professor Scott analyzed the value of poetry in a commercial age.

After the program the desirability of organizing a branch of the National Council of Teachers of English was presented by Mrs. Hulst, who declined, however, to be considered a candidate for president. The choice then fell upon Professor Brumm. Mrs. G. B. Scott, of Grand Rapids, was elected secretary-treasurer.

WISCONSIN

As usual the Wisconsin Association met on November 5 in connection with the State Teachers' Association. The chief speakers were Professor J. V. Denney, of Ohio State University, and Miss May C. Bumby, Supervisor of English in Racine. Both discussed the problem of articulating the English work of the high school with that of the grades through the medium of a supervisor. This topic grows in importance with the increase in the number of such officers.

The society feels the loss of Harry K. Bassett, who has left his position in the University of Wisconsin to join the forces in charge of the Panama-Pacific Exposition. It is expected that he will remain in the West.

NEBRASKA

Now comes Nebraska also. For many years the Nebraska teachers of English have maintained a section of the State Teachers' Association. Recently a number of leading spirits have come to feel that Nebraska should do her part in the national movement. At the meeting in Omaha, November 5, steps were taken to bring this about. A branch of the National Council was organized and arrangements made to send a delegate to the Chicago meeting.

The officers of the Nebraska association are: president, George E. Martin, State Normal School, Kearney; secretary-treasurer, Estelle R. Morrison, high school, Fairbury.

CHICAGO

The principal address at the October meeting of the Chicago English Club was by Professor John M. Clapp, of Lake Forest College, who spoke at length concerning his impressions of the Stratford Conference.

ILLINOIS

In Illinois the English teachers down state find it convenient to gather at the time of the annual conference of high schools with the State University. This occurred on November 20. The topics and speakers were as follows: "Progress during the Past Year," John M. Crowe, University High School, Chicago; "The Training of Teachers," Harry G. Paul, University of Illinois, and Miss Ruth Moore, Bloomington; "The Oral Interpretation of Literature," John M. Clapp, Lake Forest College; "Standards for Composition Work," P. M. Watson, Chrisman; "The Teaching of the History of Literature," Lora M. Henion, Pontiac, and Kathleen Roberts, Urbana.

NORTH DAKOTA

The North Dakota Association of English Teachers met in Bismarck, North Dakota, on Friday, October 23. Following is the program: "The Aim of High-School English in North Dakota," Mrs. Ellen Money, Bismarck; "Grammar as a Tool," Miss Eda D. Flagg, Devil's Lake; "On What Words Should Students Be Drilled in Spelling?" Miss Julia McDonough, Minot; Report of Committees: Course of Study, Vernon P. Squires, University; Schedule of High-School Teachers, A. E. Minard, Agricultural College; Elementary-School English, Miss Beatrice Olson, Ellendale.

Miss Edna Twamley, instructor in methods of teaching English at the State University, was elected president for the coming year, and Miss Blanche L. True, of Fargo College, secretary-treasurer.

This meeting was of especial interest inasmuch as the state board of education contemplates a thorough revision of the English work in the high schools of the state and a committee composed of members of the English Teachers' Association has been appointed to make the revision. The plans for revision include the separation of the work in literature from that in composition and a greater intensification in all lines than has been possible heretofore. It is hoped to utilize the work of the National Committee at present engaged on the problem of re-organizing the English work, and thus make the high-school course in our state as practical and inspirational as possible.